



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST

VOL. XI

WASHINGTON, D. C., AUGUST, 1898

No. 8

## ON THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY<sup>1</sup>

H. SOLOTAROFF

No one earnestly given to the study of anthropological problems will assert, in the face of accumulated evidence and the careful study of the sexual relations among primitive people, that the primary form of human marriage has been a state of promiscuous relations of the sexes. This view, held by earlier investigators,<sup>2</sup> has slowly been supplanted by one which seems more nearly to approach the true relations of the sexes in primitive human grouping. However, it would seem proper, before attempting a solution of a problem concerned with the conjugal relations of primitive people, to ascertain first, as well as it can be done, the different bio-psychic states of the primitive male and female; for, apart from the nature and abundance of food and the various climatic conditions, sexual relations, it would appear, could follow only the lines indicated by the nature of those bio-psychic states in which the primitive individuals are naturally found.

In the remotest conceivable antiquity two very important biologic conditions predominated, and these necessarily had particular influence on the primary form of sexual relations:

First, it would seem that our earlier progenitors, if not exclusively frugiverous, were at least predominantly so,<sup>3</sup> and, second,

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Anthropological Section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Aug. 26, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> McLennan, *Studies in Ancient History, comprising Primitive Marriage*, p. 92; L. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p. 418; Lubbock, *Origin of Civilization*, Am. ed., p. 60; M. Kovalevsky, *Tableau des Origines et de l'Evolution de la Famille et de la Propriété*, Russ. trans., p. 27 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> Westermarck incidentally argues thus: "Since spring is rather a time of want than a time of abundance for a frugiverous species, it is impossible to believe that our early ancestors, so long as they fed upon fruits, gave birth to their young at the beginning of that period."—E. Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*, p. 34.

that remotely primitive men had a definite pairing season, very similar to the rutting season of the lower animals. "Considering, then," says Westermarck, "that the periodicity of the sexual life rests on the kind of food on which the species lives, together with other circumstances connected with anatomical and physiological peculiarities, and considering, further, the close biological resemblance between man and man-like apes, we are almost compelled to assume that the pairing time of our earliest human or half-human ancestors was restricted to a certain season of the year." Moreover, there are direct evidences proving the existence of a human pairing season; thus M. Bagin states that the Wotiaks of Kasan still retain the very ancient custom of marrying their young at a definite period of the year, which is before the hay harvest, about the end of June;<sup>1</sup> and Dr Cook, speaking of the natives of the northwest coast of Greenland, says: "The genital sense of these people is decidedly periodical. . . . There is a grand annual outburst of sexual rage soon after the return of the sun. It comes with such force and overtakes them with such suddenness that they frequently quiver for days with passion. This culminates during the first summer days with what might be called an epidemic of venery, when wives and husbands are frequently exchanged with becoming grace and good intentions."<sup>2</sup> Such also are the habits of pairing among the Watch-an-dies in the western part of Australia, among the Indians of California, among some of the Indian hill tribes, among the Santals of India, and others, who pair "like the beasts of the field" and "the birds of the forest."<sup>3</sup>

But sexual relations follow equally from the psychic disposition of the individuals so related, as from their biologic requirements, and "while at a disadvantage in point of force when compared with the male," says Professor Thomas, "the female enjoyed a negative superiority in the fact that her sexual appetite was not so sharp as that of the male. Primitive man when he desired a mate sought her. The female was more passive and stationary. . . . The tangential disposition of the male is expressed in the system of exogamy, so characteristic of tribal life. The movement toward exogamy doubtless originates in the

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Ethnographicheskoe Obosrenie*, vol. xxx, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Dr F. A. Cook, *Med. Rec.*, vol. LI, no. 24, p. 835.

<sup>3</sup> Westermarck, *loc. cit.*, pp. 28, 29.

restlessness of the male, the tendency to make new coördinations, the stimulus to seek more unfamiliar women, and the emotional interest in making unfamiliar sexual alliances."<sup>1</sup> Similarly Ploss,<sup>2</sup> Ellis,<sup>3</sup> and Mason<sup>4</sup> describe the general psychic state of primitive man as restless and changeable, that of the woman as being more reticent and more passive. These, then, are the few, but distinctive, bio-psychic characteristics of primitive man and primitive woman, very greatly resembling similar characteristics in anthropoid animals. They mark the features of the primary sexual relations.

There is no doubt that other than bio-psychic factors bear considerable influence on the evolution of sexual relations, but whatever be the influence of these other factors in producing variations in the sexual relations of men and women through successive stages of development of social life, the original unit, the primary form of these relations, *must be the resultant of the definite bio-psychic peculiarities as they have been inherited from animal ancestry.*

Anthropologists, as well as sociologists, have variously attempted to fix hypothetically the primal form of society, and the lamentable result is a diversity of opinion hardly reconcilable at the present stage of our knowledge of the facts. Some have assumed monogamic marriage as the primary unit of the family and of society;<sup>5</sup> others, contesting this view, have substituted promiscuity as the primary form of marital relations,<sup>6</sup> and slowly evolving from this a system of consanguine tribal relations which, in their opinion, constitutes the primary form of society.

Both these views, in the light of modern research, seem to be equally arbitrary and unfounded. Even the more recent view, "the mother and her group of children,"<sup>7</sup> true as it may be as

<sup>1</sup> See Professor William I. Thomas' remarkable essay, "*The Relation of Sex to Primitive Social Control*," Am. Jour. of Sociology, vol. III, pp. 755, 756.

<sup>2</sup> Dr H. Ploss, *Das Weib in der Natur und Völkerkunde*, cap. II, "Die Psychologische Auffassung des Weibes," vol. I, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman*, introductory chapter.

<sup>4</sup> O. T. Mason, *Woman's Share in Primitive Culture*, pp. 274, 275.

<sup>5</sup> "The tie that kept together husband and wife, parents and children, was, if not the only, at least the principal social factor in the earliest life of man."—Westermarck, loc. cit., p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> See authors mentioned above.

<sup>7</sup> Professor W. I. Thomas, *On a Difference in the Metabolism of the Sexes*, Am. Jour. of Sociology, vol. III, p. 61.

the primary form of the family, can by no means be considered as the primary form of society<sup>1</sup> for the paramount reason that valuable sociologic data have placed the social sentiment not only anterior to human society or the human family, but anterior to the higher forms of animal society—nay, even anterior to the differentiation of sex. One need only to recollect the colonial life of bacteria, whose meaning is as yet unclear to us; the peculiar habits of certain infusoria previous to and during conjugation, such as Balbiani described. "With the approach of the conjugal period," he says, "the paramecia collect in large groups from all parts of the liquid around objects flowing on the surface of it or adhering to the sides of the vessel. In every one of those groups great excitement is to be noticed, which cannot be explained by the mere care for food. A higher instinct seems to predominate over the minute beings. They find each other, run after each other, playing mutually with their cilia; they conjugate for a moment, assuming the position of conjugal intercourse, but disperse immediately. . . . These peculiar enjoyments by which the microscopic beings bring themselves to the highest pitch of sexual excitement last sometimes many days before the actual conjugal act takes place." Here social enjoyment seems to precede conjugal excitement, although the latter finally follows, but one need only recollect the numberless facts of mutual aid among animals independent of sexual relations for purposes of migration, hunting, and the procuring of food, and also for play (as they have been extensively studied by Kropotkin,<sup>2</sup> Topinard,<sup>3</sup> and Gross<sup>4</sup>), and he will clearly see that, if nothing more, at least "it is an undeniable fact that the social sentiment does exist in varying degrees in the majority of animals"<sup>5</sup> independent of sexual relations. The latter must be considered generally as a *specific category of relations in society*.

*The primary sexual relations, therefore, are determined by the mutual workings of bio-psychic individual peculiarities of the male and the female under the constant influence of the inherent tendency toward social organization.*

<sup>1</sup> Professor Thomas, in our opinion, does very wrongly consider it as such.

<sup>2</sup> See Prince Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid among Animals and Men*, Nineteenth Century, vol. xxviii, 1890; 1896.

<sup>3</sup> Topinard, *Science and Faith*, The Monist, vol. vi, nos. i and iv; vol. vii, no. ii.

<sup>4</sup> Gross, *Spiele der Thiere*.

<sup>5</sup> Topinard, loc. cit., vol. vii, p. 222.

Desirable as it is to determine with some degree of exactitude the primary form of sexual relations in human society, the problem presents, however, a number of difficulties which seem on first considerations almost unsurmountable. Moreover, the beginnings of human institutions are wrapped in the dimness of the past, and although landmarks as guides for scientific research are determined here and there, they unfortunately present no secure stronghold for bold scientific deductions. One of the greatest difficulties referred to is the extinction of almost every vestige at present of human groups which could properly be called aboriginal, for even the *Ætos*, Eskimos, Botocudos, the wandering Weddhas of Ceylon, the Bushman and western Australians, which are considered the lowest in the scale of development of human social grouping now existing, may nevertheless be considered far above those of our earlier progenitors, which correspond to the habitant of the Neanderthal, the contemporaries of the mammoth and the cave bear, yet conjugal relations certainly existed then.

No one, therefore, can speak of direct evidence, of convincing ethnographic facts gathered from actual observation of the life of those aboriginal groups. Such facts we have not, nor can we ever hope to obtain any, because, just as some links in the geological record, or as the connecting links in the evolution of animal life, they are lost to us, buried in the secrets of the past. Nevertheless, we need not despair in our efforts to reach the truth, for, although direct evidence is lacking, the mass of forthcoming indirect evidence as to the primordial character of primitive sexual relations reaches an abundance conclusive in itself. Careful study of life in the ethnic group leaves no room for doubt that certain surviving traits are suggestive of definite antecedent habits and forms of life which so nearly correspond to the bio-psychic requirements of primitive man, that the primitive forms or beginnings of certain institutions may be justifiably conjectured and safely established as actual facts of the past.

One of those beginnings is the primitive form of conjugal relations or the beginnings of the primitive family. "Primitive man when he desired a mate sought her," and when he found her joined her and her people solely for the purpose of satisfying his sexual appetite; with rearing of the young the primitive

male seems to have had little to do during a period predominantly frugivorous.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere the character of the man is warlike, gamelike, not sedentary and industrial, which is characteristic of the woman. Among primitive people who have not yet become sedentary, and among those who have just evolved into sedentary groups, perhaps, in virtue of woman's habits and her progress in deriving the greatest benefit from the soil, she is still the constructor of the hut and the principal provider of her family. Thus Cunov freely states that "among all lowest hunting savages, among the Australians, Weddhas, and Botocudos, the woman is not merely a sexual being. Her work is more valued than her sexual qualifications, for to her share falls the taking apart and reconstruction of the huts, the carrying of the property during wandering, the gathering of insects, roots, and fruits, the finding of wood, and, most of all, the preparing of food."<sup>2</sup> Mr Man says that among the Andaman islanders the women erect the shelter when quarters are taken up for rest,<sup>3</sup> and Professor Mason is responsible for the statement that "the Indian skin lodge is from first to last the work of women. The earth lodge and pueblo are the work of both sexes, but these are not as primitive as the cave or the bark or skin shelter."<sup>4</sup> Similarly Professor M. Kovalevsky, speaking of sundry Caucasian tribes, states that "the woman of that epoch is in many ways a surprise. She not only fills all home duties, but tills the soil and even breeds cattle, while her husband is totally absorbed by war exercises and hunting. A Tscherkessian, an Osetin, the Mountain Tartar, and the Adige of the steppe pass their time in absolute idleness, while to bring water from the spring, to keep up the fire, to look after the cattle, and till the soil are the duties of the women of the house."<sup>5</sup>

It is therefore evident that in the earliest beginnings of human sexual relations the only stimulus for their perpetuation on the

---

<sup>1</sup> From a biological point of view, the evolution of a class of mammalia is sufficient proof in itself of the absolute neglect of the male in the participation of the rearing of the young. Natural selection worked in favor of those offspring only which were nourished by the secretions of the mother, and thus Nature herself dispensed with paternal care.

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Cunov, *Die Ökonomische Grundlagen der Mutterherrschaft*, Neu Zeit, xvi Jahrgang, i Band, no. 4.

<sup>3</sup> See Man's *Andaman Islanders*.

<sup>4</sup> Mason, loc. cit., p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> M. Kovalevsky, *Tableau des Origines et de l'Evolution de la Famille et de la Propriété*, Russ. trans., p. 80.

part of the male has been the satiation of his sensual appetite, while the bearing and rearing of progeny devolved entirely upon the female. Under conditions of primitive man's extreme changeableness and the presistence of a more or less definite pairing season, anxious only to satisfy his sexual appetite, and, moreover, bearing no direct natural bond to his offspring, the *sexual relations primarily established between the primitive male and female could have been no other than temporary relations.*

In the early history of Arabia traces of such temporary marriages have actually been found even as late as the Epoch of the Prophet—"the temporary alliances known as *Nikâh-al-Mot'a* which were common in Arabia at the time of Mohammed."<sup>1</sup> "The characteristic mark of a *mot'a* marriage," says Professor Smith, "as Moslem writers define it, is that the contract specifies how long the marriage shall hold. Strictly speaking, however, this can only have been a negative provision. . . . The contract for a certain period is therefore *merely a limitation* to absolute freedom of separation. . . . The *mot'a* marriage was a purely personal contract, founded on consent between a man and a woman without any intervention on the part of the woman's kin," and, on evidence brought forward by the Hollandian scientist Wilken, which Professor R. Smith considers conclusive, "no witnesses were necessary to the contract, and that no Walî [father or guardian of the woman] appeared. Now," continues Professor Smith, "the fact that there was no contract with the woman's kin, . . . and, indeed, that her kin might not know anything about it, can have only one explanation. . . . In *mot'a* marriages the woman did not leave her home, . . . and the children of the marriage did not belong to the husband."<sup>2</sup>

This form of marriage may properly be considered the most typical survival of the earliest relations of the sexes all over the world, surely not as it existed in Arabia in pre-Islamic times, already conditioned by an advance toward systematic sexual relations, but in its spirit of freedom of choice, in its freedom of sexual intercourse, and in its freedom of dissolution of those relations at the pleasure of the mating individuals. Though few authentic ethnic facts of this primordial freedom of choice, inter-

<sup>1</sup> See Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.



course, and dissolution of sexual relations can actually be found, for the reason that such primitive ethnic groups are almost extinct, yet Letourneau, apparently on good authority, states that just such marriages, "free and easily canceled unions," which are "still more common, are those of the Nauka-Hivians, that are broken at will, provided there are no children; those of the Hottentots, and those of the Abyssinians, who marry, part, and remarry at will."<sup>1</sup> Similarly the "Nishinam of California may be said to set up and dissolve the conjugal estate almost as easily as do the brutes." The young man seeking favors usually gives presents and, "if accepted," comes, and either leads the girl away or goes to live at her house.<sup>2</sup> Again, a Wintūn generally pays nothing for his wife, but simply "takes up with her. . . . This makes the marital relations extremely loose and easily sundered."<sup>3</sup> Typical in this respect seem to be the marriages of a very savage people, such as are the Botocudos. Of their marriages Mr Keane states that they "are all of a purely temporary nature, contracted without formality of any sort, dissolved on the slightest pretext or without any pretext, merely through love of change or caprice."<sup>4</sup> Similarly the Dyaks contract temporally sexual alliances, so that it is easy to find among them men and women of middle age who have already had several temporary mates.<sup>5</sup> Schoolcraft states that among the Creek Indians marriage is considered only as a temporary convenience.<sup>6</sup> According to Lisiansky, in the Sandwich islands "a man and a woman live together as long as they please, and may at any time separate and make choice of other partners."<sup>7</sup> Similarly Sir Edward Belcher states that in the Andaman islands the custom prevails by which man and woman separate so soon as the child is weaned, and each seeks a new marriage alliance.<sup>8</sup>

Experimental marriages, although not totally in the spirit of *mot'a* or temporary marriages, merely retaining the freedom of dissolving the marital bond, are rather of local character, yet clearly indicate the origin from which they have evolved. Thus

<sup>1</sup> Ch. Letourneau, *The Evolution of Marriage and of the Family*, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Powers, *Tribes of California*, pp. 317, 318.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup> Keane in *Jour. Anthropol. Institute*, vol. XIII, p. 206.

<sup>5</sup> See St John in *Trans. Ethno. Soc.*, vol. II, p. 237.

<sup>6</sup> Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes*, vol. V, p. 272.

<sup>7</sup> Lisiansky, *A Voyage Around the World*; cited by Westermarck, p. 527.

<sup>8</sup> Belcher in *Trans. Ethno. Soc.*, vol. V, p. 45.

the Sonthals, an aboriginal tribe of India, marry only after a satisfactory six days' trial.<sup>1</sup> Similarly certain Tartar tribes of Europe and Siberia had an institution of experimental marriage lasting for a year.<sup>2</sup> According to Skene, the Scottish Highlanders had a custom termed "handfasting," by which two chiefs agreed "that the heir of one should live with the daughter of the other as her husband for twelve months and a day. If in that time the woman became a mother or proved to be with child, the marriage became good in law, even although no priest had performed the marriage in due form; but should there not have occurred any appearance of issue, the contract was considered at an end, and each party was at liberty to marry or 'hand-fast' with any other."<sup>3</sup> Of the people of ancient Scotland the Rev. Ch. Rogers, referring to the same custom, states that "men selected female companions with whom to cohabit for a year. At the expiry of this period both parties were accounted free; they might either unite in marriage or live singly."<sup>4</sup>

More often than not the male abandons the female, by virtue of his psychic disposition, although the opposite is possible, and the children remain with their mother as her natural family. *It is the mother and her offspring, therefore, left free to contract new sexual bonds, that constitutes the primary form of the family.* It is thus in her capacity that she builds the cave or the hut and provides for her group of children from time immemorial, while the male either idles away playfully, hunts, or finds cause for perpetual warfare. Even when marriage has evolved into a more or less permanent union among very primitive peoples, the freedom of the unmarried of both sexes is a remarkable proof of the original relations of primitive man in past ages.<sup>5</sup>

Powers' classic work on *Tribes of California* abounds in evidence showing the freedom of relations of both sexes before marriage assumes a permanent character. Thus, among the Karoks, "before marriage virtue is an attribute which can hardly be said to

---

<sup>1</sup> See Letourneau, *Evolution of Marriage*, etc, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Simons, *History of the Gypsies*, p. 263, f. n.

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Westermarck, *ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> Dr Post (*Die Grundlagen des Rechts*, p. 187; also *Geschlechtsgenossenschaft der Urzeit*, p. 30) regards this a proof of promiscuity, but evidently the term so used is ambiguous. If by promiscuity is meant mixed unconditional sexual relations, I hold that Dr Post is wrong. If by promiscuity is meant freedom to live with all males or females, selecting one of all for a certain period, the author is certainly right.

exist in either sex, most of the young women being a common possession."<sup>1</sup> Of the Poam Pomo tribes, "as is true of California Indians generally, there is scarcely such an attribute known as virtue and chastity in either sex before marriage."<sup>2</sup> Again, speaking of the California Indians generally, Powers states "that among the unmarried of both sexes there is very little or no restraint, and the freedom is so much a matter of course that there is no reproach attaching to it,"<sup>3</sup> and, similarly, all over the world among the lowest savages. Thus, according to Waitz, the richer girls of Akra lived with whomsoever they wished,<sup>4</sup> and Bastian states that in Mayambe the girls are perfectly free before marriage, while no one would dare to seduce a married woman.<sup>5</sup> "Among the Tipperahs, Oraons, and Kolyas unmarried girls may cohabit freely with young men, but are never found living promiscuously with them. Among the Dyaks on the Batang Lupar, too, unchastity is not rare, but a woman usually confines herself to one lover."<sup>6</sup> Of the Monbutoo woman, says Dr Schweinfurth, "the two sexes conduct themselves toward each other with excessive freedom. Toward their husbands they [the married women] exhibit the highest degree of independence. . . . Polygamy is unlimited. The daily witness of the Nubians only too plainly testified that fidelity to the obligations of marriage was little known."<sup>7</sup> Post states that in Wadai and Darfur the girls live in perfect freedom before marriage, and of the Brames it is said that they praise their wives for having many lovers.<sup>8</sup>

A few peculiar traits in the wooing and courtship of some Russian Inorodozes (outer tribes) also retain unmistakable traces of the primitive form of marriage. Among the Kirgises courtship assumes the following long procedure: Generally a person or persons (*swachi*) are sent to the father of the girl, who, when matters are agreed upon, leave a present (*kyrgabau*) for the girl, usually a pair of earrings or a ring. Then the first portion of the *kalym* (prize for the girl) is sent, inviting the girl's parents to

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Powers, *Tribes of California*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

<sup>4</sup> Waitz, *Anthropologie*, vol. II, p. 108.

<sup>5</sup> Bastian, *Deutsche Expedition*, vol. I, p. 244.

<sup>6</sup> Westermarck, *loc. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, vol. II, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> Post, *Geschlechtsgenossenschaft der Urzeit*, p. 31.

visit the parents of the bridegroom. They come and bring presents (*kyint*). After this visit some one of the bride's family goes to the parents of the bridegroom for the *kalym*. He receives usually a part of it and a present, a horse or a foal, which, on the return of the parties to the bride's house, is killed and prayers are offered. From this moment—that is, from the payment of the greater part of the *kalym*—the bridegroom has the right to see his girl bride. He soon finds the opportunity, but cannot enter his future father-in-law's house. A special tent is erected for him, to which he quietly repairs. Toward night a female relative stealthily brings the bride to the tent, for which the relative receives a present, and he thus passes his first marital night. After a few days visiting he returns home. Such visits are often repeated during the time that the *kalym* is being paid out. Not until the *kalym* is fully paid, however, does the *toi* (marriage feast) take place or is the marriage formally recognized, after which the bride is taken to her husband's home.<sup>1</sup> The inspection of the bridal bed after this formal consummation of the marriage, and the absolute demand of evidence of chastity and virginity,<sup>2</sup> is here, as elsewhere, either a sham procedure or, if actually meant, signifies that previous to the introduction of this custom chastity and virginity were rarely, if ever, found at the time of the formal marriage.<sup>3</sup> The parents of the bride are well aware of the previous visits of the bridegroom, yet there is no objection on their part, for apparently this is a survival, from remote antiquity, in which the very process of family life has had a similar form.

This, then, is a brief array of the facts which tell so graphically in favor of temporary relations of the sexes among primitive peoples.

Yet the freedom to contract and dissolve conjugal relations, the almost universal freedom of sexual intercourse among the unmarried, some unmistakable facts of unconditional sexual promiscuity among primitive man, have led earlier anthropologists to assume a universal stage of promiscuity. Closer study, however, does inevitably prove that free sexual intercourse among the unmarried, and possible promiscuous intercourse among a

---

<sup>1</sup> N. Israszoff in the *Ethnographicheskoe Obosrenie*, book xxxiv, pp. 73-75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See Bagin, on the marriage ceremonies of the Wotiaks, in *Ethnographicheskoe Obosrenie*, book xxxiii.

whole group, which some authors have inaptly termed savage licentiousness, is the *highest expression of the ecstasy of play*, the instinct so powerfully prompted by the social sentiment.

We have ceased to consider the struggle for existence as the *sole* factor of natural selection, for we have learned the great value of association working toward the same end; similarly must we cease to consider the "law of combat" as the *sole* factor of sexual selection, the social sentiment as expressed in the playfulness of youth subserving similar ends. "The playfulness of young animals," concludes Professor Groos, "is based upon the fact that certain very important instincts appear at a time when the animal does not yet need them." But these instincts are of many advantages to the animal, for "those advantages consist in the playful exercises which adapt the animal to all important uses and necessities of life."<sup>1</sup> Playfulness, therefore, with all animals, if not a distinct *spieltrieb*, as some authors think,<sup>2</sup> is at least an expression of definite instincts leading to the better adaptation of animals to the surrounding conditions of life. Playfulness among primitive man may be said to be proverbial, and Dr Wirth rightfully asserts, in speaking of the natives of Formosa, that "festivities with general invitations, feasts, and rejoicings are very common and on the slightest pretext."<sup>3</sup> This is equally true of all savages. Thus the Hos, an Indian hill tribe, have a feast in January, and, according to Dalton, "the festival becomes a saturnalia, during which servants forget their duty to their masters, children the reverence for parents, men their respect for women, and women all notions of modesty, delicacy, and gentleness."<sup>4</sup> Similar festivals, ultimately resulting in promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, are reputed to take place among the Punjas in Jeypore, among the Kotars inhabiting the Neilgherries, the Keres in New Mexico, the Hottentots, and others.<sup>5</sup> In Russia such festivals are reported to have taken place in June each year.<sup>6</sup> It would seem that—if, in the words of Professor Ziegler, "all animals require for *copulation* a highly excited nervous system, and we therefore

---

<sup>1</sup> Groos, *Spiele der Thiere*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Lazarus, *Reize des Spieles*.

<sup>3</sup> A. Wirth, *Aborigines of Formosa*, American Anthropologist, vol. x, p. 365.

<sup>4</sup> Colonel Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*.

<sup>5</sup> Westermarck, loc. cit., pp. 29, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

find generally among animals exciting playfulness before the sexual act"—our early progenitors have lived promiscuously only incidentally to the highest expression of playfulness. Play is a social instinct *per se*, and the tendency toward closer social relations among primitive man has often expressed itself in playfulness, the highest form of this joyful intoxication and ecstasy having incidentally become promiscuous sexual intercourse. As a distinct stage in the evolution of the family, facts do not warrant us to consider it.

In conclusion, let me briefly review the positions I have endeavored to prove. Whatever be the primary form of sexual relations, it seems evident that they issue from the bio-psychic requirements of the distinct individualities of the male and the female. Man, being a gregarious animal, with powerful inherent tendencies toward social compact, these sexual relations—the expression of coördinated bio-psychic requirements of distinct individualities—are primarily formed and constantly molded and remolded by the pressure of his social life. The primary form of sexual relations, in conformity with the human bio-psychic requirements, has been a temporary sexual union, lasting a longer or a shorter period, and being dissolved as freely as contracted. In this, the primary form of sexual relations, the child is the natural accompaniment of the mother; nay, it is the expression of her bio-psychic individuality. The *mother*—free to contract or to dissolve sexual bonds—and *the group of children resulting from these sexual relations are, then, the primary form of the family*. In her freedom to contract or dissolve her marital bonds, and in nourishing and providing for her young, is expressed her individuality, biologically and psychologically. In contracting and dissolving sexual relations more often than the female, in roaming about, in providing for himself, and partly for the propitiation of the good will of the female, through very powerful muscular effort, is the biological and psychological assertion of the individuality of the male. But the very assertion of those bio-psychic individualities in primitive society—such as the contraction of marriage by the male outside of his own group, by force or otherwise, or such as the hardships, under unfavorable local conditions, of providing shelter and nourishment for the young by the female, demanding, as the prize of sexual favors, help and protection—have led the woman slowly out of

bondage of economic care for her family group, but led her into marital bondage,<sup>1</sup> while the most powerful tendency toward socialization among primitive men, expressing itself in various ways, has incidentally expressed itself, also, in occasional sexual promiscuity as the outcome of the ecstasies of play—one of the most potent instincts of the social sentiment.

Such, then, are the facts and the conclusions to which we are led in the study of the life of our early progenitors.

---

ON HONDURAS ARCHEOLOGY.—There is no doubt that the country now comprised within the sparsely peopled territory of Honduras was once inhabited by Indians influenced by the Maya culture and artistic style prevalent in Yucatan, Chiapas, etc. But recent explorations show that portions of that republic once harbored also several other peoples, each with a distinct culture, and that there was anciently a mixture of cultures, as represented by the pottery and other objects found in refuse deposits, especially along Uluá river, which drains the western part of that territory and empties into the Gulf of Honduras. Mr George Byron Gordon investigated the section referred to during 1896 and 1897 for the Peabody Museum at Cambridge. The results of his researches now appear in volume 1, numbers 4 and 5, of the *Memoirs of the Museum* (4°). Number 4 describes the "Researches in the Uloa Valley, Honduras," the account covering 44 pages; number 5 is devoted to the "Caverns of Copan" and comprises 12 pages. Both memoirs are illustrated with maps, text-cuts, and photographic plates representing landscapes and pottery. The specimens figured or specially described in the report form only a small portion of the collection made by Mr Gordon, but, as the entire collection of objects is now displayed in the Peabody Museum, their interesting character may readily be observed by all students.

The "Caverns of Copan," described in the second part of the *Memoirs* (number 5), are four miles northwestward from the principal group of the Copan ruins, in a limestone ridge rising abruptly from the Sesesmil brook. The four principal caves, explored in April, 1896, yielded a considerable number of interesting objects of antiquity.

A. S. GATSCHET.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the transitory facts, see McGee, *Beginnings of Marriage*, Amer. Anthropologist, vol. ix, pp. 375, 376.